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31 August 1988

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Subject: NIE 20/88

You are right. This is a much improved draft on a very difficult topic to cover briefly. I still have some problems, however. If you insist, I'm willing to send the draft to the SRP as it stands with the proviso that the problems get fixed in parallel and that the SRP gets the benefit of this memo so that they can either disagree or avoid repeating the critique.

I have some minor editorial complaints throughout, and have suggested fixes to many of them. There are lots of places where excessive wordiness can be reduced without any loss of meaning. In some places, there are problems with syntax, usage, and strangely mixed metaphors -- this in a generally well-written and quite readable paper.

I suggest that less use be made of the term Pillar in the paper, despite the title. Although widely used and popular, as the paper notes, the term is a most inaccurate metaphor for the real thing, which is more akin to a Puddle, or a Pudding, or a Push-Pull Perplex. It sounds somewhat sophomoric to keep using the term Pillar; generally use NATO Europeans or NATO Europe. I also recommend getting rid of the "words versus deeds" formulation, which connotes in common usage "meaningless versus meaningful" and is therefore not appropriate here. The words discussed are meaningful words about security policy, arms control, and perceptions of the East.

A more substantial problem with the draft is the absence of evidence and discussions related to evidence...although it is better on this score than the last draft. Admittedly this is a paper analyzing things that "everybody knows." And we now have some figures/charts on defense cooperation. But this is a very political estimate. Could we not have some data on the number of times key political leaders meet bilaterally or multilaterally? Could we not have some quotations that reveal how key political leaders think about the ability of European cooperation/cohesion to deal with a changing security environment? Is there relevant polling data on how publics regard European unity in relation to security issues, and how Left and Right differ? This stuff exists because the author's judgments rest upon it. We need to see some of it for credibility.

The biggest problem with the draft concerns the biggest problem with the subject, namely: Whither Europe? The draft makes two very important political judgments: 1) In addition to being more assertive (no quarrel), NATO Europe is going to be more cohesive in dealing with the US on security (and presumably other) issues. 2) On balance, this will be good for the US despite downside aspects and the unlikelihood of any relief on burden sharing. These are neither intuitively obvious nor uncontroversial

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judgments, so we need to be very explicit and clear why we are making them. If Gorbachev is removing the threat and the US increasingly sees detente as real, aren't the "magnetic fields of power" which held post-war Europe together dissolving and won't we see centrifugal forces prevail?

As I read it, we are predicting more cohesion because a) we see (and describe) a currently existing trend that leads to more cohesion despite the persistence of "old bad habits" and b) we believe that that trend is rooted in widespread (leaders, elites, public) appreciation of common interests that are deeper than the "old bad habits." There is, indeed, a third, slightly paradoxical, reason that needs to be brought out in the middle of the paper. Key countries are cleaving more closely to one another because they each fear what the "old bad habits" will lead the others to do in the absence of the multifarious entanglements they are developing. Clearly the German-French-UK relationships have a lot of this.

Why do we see this as in US interest on balance? Because cohesive obedience to the US is not in the cards at all, and unified independence is better than general disorder. This simple thought has to be brought out more clearly. One of the reasons this is so is that -- and I think the record shows -- leftist or nationalist goofiness on security issues tends to be muted when the Allies get together. It's easier to be silly when arguing with the US than with your neighbor.

I think these judgments are valid, but they are far from sure things.

Fritz

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